



**City Manager's Office**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Danville marks close of first streetscape phase**

Calling downtown the hallmark of any city, Danville officials held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Friday for the first phase of the River District streetscape project. The ceremony marked the close of construction in the 300, 400 and 500 blocks of Main Street and the block of Union Street between Main and Spring streets.

Mayor Sherman Saunders said the streetscape project and other improvements were essential to attract private investment.

"The downtown of a city is like the living room of your home," Saunders said. "If people come to your home, they normally enter through the living room. Their impression of the rest of your house is determined by your living room."



Saunders said past impressions of Danville's downtown were not favorable.

Potential investors, he said, "took their money" elsewhere. "We knew we had to invest in our downtown," Saunders said.

Construction on the first phase of the streetscape project began in September 2012. The activity ranged from widening sidewalks and installing brick pavers to creating more visible and safer pedestrian crossings, upgrading utilities and providing amenities such as trees, benches and new lighting.

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City Manager Joe King said the purpose of the streetscape project was more than to make the downtown “pretty, but to create an atmosphere for investment and enjoyment.”

Karl Stauber, president and chief executive of the Danville Regional Foundation, said the improvements along Main Street present a striking transformation.

“I invite you to look down Main Street,” Stauber said. “Three years ago, what you would have seen was a tired city. Now when you look down Main Street, you see a city of possibilities.”

The foundation has been a partner in the River District project, and it provided funding for the purchase and demolition of the former Downtowner Motor Inn on Main Street. The building was demolished last year. After standing empty for more than two decades, the demolition was a focal point for blight eradication and redevelopment in the River District.

“The River District is demonstrating to people here and people outside how we are moving forward,” Stauber said. “In the last three years, we have gone from being a community where you heard a lot of ‘cannot do’ talk to what you see now is a community focused on ‘can do.’”

Saunders and King acknowledged that merchants along Main and Union streets were negatively affected during the construction process. “Today, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to our merchants and their patrons for their patience,” Saunders said.

King encouraged residents to support these merchants.

Construction continues in the second phase of streetscape improvements. This phase began in April of this year. It includes creation of the Main Street Plaza and installation of a fountain in front of Lou’s Antiques and Jakes on Main.

The streetscape phases are part of the broader River District Development Project, which is in its third year. As part of the project, the city has adopted design guidelines for the look and feel of buildings in the district; converted Patton Street to two-way traffic in order to provide better access to businesses and parking lots serving stores on Main Street; opened a new parking lot at 500 Main St.; and conducted a parking study for the full district.

Designs are being developed for creation of a pedestrian lane on the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Bridge to connect the walking trail on the north side of the Dan River to the Main Street Plaza and the walking trail on the south side of the river.

The River District has attracted \$78 million in private investment over five years, with much of the activity having taken place since the start of the River District Development Project. That figure outpaces public investment by threefold.

For more information, visit [www.riverdistrictdanville.com](http://www.riverdistrictdanville.com).

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